# Educational Management

# The Implementation of Reading Literacy Strategies in Merdeka Curriculum Instruction for Fourth-Grade Students at SD Negeri Buniwah 01

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| Article Info | Abstract |
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| | This study aims to describe the implementation of reading literacy strategies in Merdeka Curriculum instruction for fourth-grade students at SD Negeri Buniwah 01, covering planning, implementation, evaluation, and the supporting and inhibiting factors faced by the teacher. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. The participants consisted of one fourth-grade teacher, one principal, and 25 students. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and the use of adequate theoretical references. The results show that the teacher planned literacy activities by integrating reading materials into teaching modules aligned with themes and learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum. The main strategies used were guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud. These strategies increased student engagement, facilitated text comprehension, and enriched vocabulary. Supporting factors included the availability of a reading corner, the principal's commitment, and the teacher's creativity in designing literacy activities. Inhibiting factors included limited thematic reading collections, diverse reading abilities among students, time constraints, and an uneven home reading culture. Efforts to address these obstacles involved utilizing digital reading resources, developing simplified teacher-made texts, implementing differentiated instruction, and involving parents through home reading assignments. Overall, the implementation of reading literacy strategies in Merdeka Curriculum instruction had a positive impact on students' motivation and reading comprehension and contributed to the development of adaptive and sustainable reading literacy programs in primary schools. |

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy is a crucial foundation for students' learning success at the primary school level. Literacy is not merely the ability to decode symbols and words, but also the ability to understand, interpret, evaluate, and use texts to solve problems in everyday life. Low reading literacy directly affects academic achievement and students' ability to participate in learning across subjects.

Various international and national surveys indicate that Indonesian students' reading literacy still requires serious attention. The 2022 PISA results place Indonesian students' reading

literacy scores below the OECD average. Similarly, the National Assessment at the primary school level shows that a considerable proportion of students have not yet reached the proficient category in reading literacy. This condition demands stronger reading instruction in classrooms, particularly in primary schools as the foundational stage.

The Merdeka Curriculum, which has begun to be implemented nationally, places strong emphasis on strengthening literacy and numeracy competencies. Learning is designed to be more flexible, contextual, and student-centered. Teachers are encouraged to develop varied strategies tailored to students' learning needs. In this context, reading literacy is not solely the responsibility of Indonesian language teachers, but is integrated into all subjects through activities conducted before, during, and after reading.

However, classroom practice shows that the implementation of reading literacy is not yet optimal. Some teachers still focus on the mechanical aspects of reading without sufficient reflection and discussion of text meaning. Classroom reading materials are also limited and not fully aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands differentiation and the strengthening of the Profile of Pancasila Students. In addition, differences in students' reading abilities, limited facilities, and uneven family support pose further challenges.

Previous studies have examined reading literacy in primary schools, but most were conducted in the context of the 2013 Curriculum or focused on a single strategy. Research that elaborates in detail how a combination of guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud is integrated into Merdeka Curriculum instruction in a fourth-grade classroom, along with its supporting and inhibiting factors, remains limited. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies that explicitly describe teachers' concrete steps and practical solutions when facing literacy challenges in class.

Based on these gaps, this study was conducted to examine in depth the implementation of reading literacy strategies in Merdeka Curriculum instruction in a fourth-grade classroom at SD Negeri Buniwah 01. The study focuses on: (1) the planning, implementation, and evaluation of reading literacy strategies carried out by the teacher; (2) supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation; and (3) the impact of these strategies on students' motivation and reading comprehension. The findings are expected not only to enrich the literature but also to provide a model of good practice that can be adapted by other teachers and primary schools.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because the researcher intended to understand the phenomenon of implementing reading literacy strategies in depth and within its real-life context in a single school. A case study design allows the researcher to explore processes, interactions, and meanings that emerge during the implementation of literacy strategies in classroom instruction.

### Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at SD Negeri Buniwah 01 in Brebes, which has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum since the 2023/2024 academic year. The school was selected purposively because it has an active literacy program and strong managerial support from the principal. The participants included: (1) the fourth-grade classroom teacher as the main implementer of reading literacy strategies; (2) 25 fourth-grade students as participants in the activities; and (3) the principal as the policy maker for the school's literacy programs.

### Research Focus

This research focuses on the implementation of reading literacy strategies within the Independent Curriculum, including planning, classroom implementation, evaluation, and reflection. Furthermore, it examines the supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing

reading literacy strategies in schools. Furthermore, it analyzes the impact of these strategies on fourth-grade students' motivation and reading comprehension.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using three main techniques includes participatory observation of reading literacy activities in the fourth-grade classroom. The researcher observed teacher–student interactions, the use of strategies, pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, and students' responses. Second, in-depth interviews with the fourth-grade teacher, the principal, and several students. The interviews were semi-structured to enable deeper exploration of planning, implementation, challenges, and support. Third, Documentation, including teaching modules, lesson plans, assessment records, photographs of activities, and students' work.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model, which includes data reduction, namely selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research focus and categorizing them into themes such as planning, implementation, student responses, and challenges. Second, data display in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and matrices to clarify patterns and relationships among categories. Third, conclusion drawing and verification by interpreting the meaning of the data, conducting triangulation, and confirming preliminary findings with informants (member checking).

**Trustworthiness and Research Ethics**

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation (teacher, students, principal) and technique triangulation (observation, interview, documentation), member checking, and the use of adequate theoretical references. The research followed ethical procedures by obtaining formal permission from the school, explaining the purpose of the study to all participants, maintaining confidentiality of identities, and using the data solely for academic purposes.

The sample itself is a part or representative of the population that is the object of the study (Suharsimi Arikunto, 2010: 109). The data in this study were collected to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, including primary data obtained through questionnaires from teachers at State Junior High School Sub-Rayon 02 in Jepara Regency, as well as secondary data in the form of school documents and relevant previous studies. The main data collection used questionnaires compiled based on variable indicators, supported by literature studies, because this method is efficient, measurable, and allows for valid statistical analysis. All data were collected cross-sectionally to accurately analyze pedagogical competence, achievement motivation, organizational commitment, and teacher performance.

Path analysis is an advanced statistical technique of multiple regression used to test cause-and-effect patterns involving direct and indirect influences between variables (Sarwono, 2011; Kusnendi, 2008). This method is appropriate for research with mediating variables, such as organizational commitment in this study, because it can describe how independent variables affect dependent variables both directly and through intermediary variables. Through path analysis, researchers can assess the strength of each influence path and test whether the relationships formed are in accordance with the proposed theoretical model. The conceptual framework in this study can be described as follows:

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**
**Result**
**1. Planning of Reading Literacy Strategies**

The fourth-grade teacher integrated reading literacy planning into teaching modules and lesson plans. Literacy activities were designed to align with the learning themes and intended learning outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum. Reading materials were selected from textbooks, supplementary reading, and digital sources relevant to students' daily lives, such as stories about the environment, health, and local culture.

The planning covered pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages. In the pre-reading stage, the teacher prepared guiding questions and activities to activate prior knowledge. In the while-reading stage, the teacher planned the use of guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud. In the post-reading stage, the teacher designed discussion activities, identification of main ideas, and creative tasks such as writing summaries and making posters that conveyed the story's message.

This planning is consistent with Merdeka Curriculum principles, which require clear learning objectives, meaningful activities, and formative assessment as a basis for improving instruction.

## 2. Implementation of Reading Literacy Strategies

### a) Guided Reading

In guided reading, the teacher grouped students into small groups based on their reading ability. The teacher began by introducing the title and briefly previewing the content of the text, then invited students to read together in turns. During reading, the teacher posed guiding questions and clarified difficult vocabulary. After reading, students were asked to retell the content in their own words.

Observations indicated that guided reading helped students focus on the text and reduced anxiety about making mistakes. Previously passive students became more willing to ask and answer questions.

### b) Paired Reading

Paired reading was implemented by assigning students to heterogeneous pairs. Students took turns reading paragraphs while their partners listened and offered help when difficulties arose. After reading, pairs discussed the questions prepared by the teacher.

This activity fostered cooperation and mutual support. Students with higher reading ability acted as peer tutors for their partners. The classroom atmosphere became more lively and relaxed yet remained focused on the learning objectives.

### c) Reading Aloud

The teacher regularly conducted reading aloud at the beginning of lessons. The teacher read stories with expressive intonation and used illustrations. Students were asked to listen, predict the plot, and note new vocabulary. Afterwards, some students were invited to retell the story or convey its moral message.

This activity successfully increased students' attention, particularly among those with lower reading skills. They were able to understand the text through listening while following the text displayed by the teacher.

### d) Integration of Visual and Digital Literacy

In addition to the three main strategies, the teacher occasionally used illustrated reading materials and simple digital media such as slides and short reading videos. Students were guided to connect textual information with visual images so that conceptual understanding became more concrete.

## 3. Students' Responses

Interview and observation data showed that students responded very positively to the reading literacy activities. They said that reading with peers was more enjoyable and helped them understand stories more easily. Most students appeared enthusiastic, frequently raised their hands to respond to questions, and were more confident in expressing their opinions.

Improvements were also observed in reading comprehension. Students began to identify main ideas, mention characters and storylines, and relate the content to their daily experiences. The teacher reported that reading assignments and formative assessment results tended to improve compared to the beginning of the semester.

## 4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The main supporting factors included:

1) The school's commitment to literacy programs, such as the "15 minutes of reading" activity and the provision of a reading corner.

2) The teacher's creativity in modifying reading strategies in accordance with students' characteristics.
3) A conducive classroom environment, with a well-arranged reading corner and engaging instructional media.

The inhibiting factors included:

1) Limited reading collections, both in number and in the variety of themes relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum.
2) Considerable variation in students' reading abilities, requiring the teacher to divide attention more intensively.
3) Time constraints due to a dense lesson schedule, which sometimes reduced opportunities for post-reading discussions.
4) An uneven reading culture at home; some students reported rarely reading with their parents.

To address these obstacles, the teacher and school took several measures: increasing access to digital reading resources, creating simplified teacher-made texts, implementing differentiated instruction, and establishing collaboration with parents through home reading assignments requiring parental signatures.

**Discussion**

The findings indicate that the combination of guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud aligns with the balanced literacy approach, in which shared reading, teacher-guided reading, and independent reading complement one another. This implementation also reflects constructivist and sociocultural perspectives, which emphasize the importance of social interaction in constructing meaning.

In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, these strategies demonstrate how literacy can be integrated across learning stages pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading while remaining responsive to students' diverse abilities. The use of peer tutoring in paired reading and the scaffolding provided in guided reading exemplify the application of the zone of proximal development in classroom practice.

In terms of novelty, this study offers a concrete illustration of the integrated implementation of three reading literacy strategies within the Merdeka Curriculum in a single fourth-grade classroom. The study not only describes instructional processes but also identifies supporting and inhibiting factors and the teacher's strategies in dealing with limitations in learning resources and time. This model of good practice can serve as a reference for teachers and primary schools facing similar challenges in developing reading literacy programs.

**CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the implementation of reading literacy strategies in Merdeka Curriculum instruction at SD Negeri Buniwah 01 has had a positive impact on students' motivation and reading comprehension. The fourth-grade teacher planned reading literacy activities by integrating them into teaching modules and lesson plans aligned with themes and learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum. Reading materials were drawn from textbooks, supplementary texts, and digital sources relevant to students' everyday experiences, and the activities covered pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages.

In implementation, the teacher combined guided reading, paired reading, and reading aloud, supported by visual and digital media. These strategies increased student engagement, facilitated comprehension of texts, and enriched vocabulary. Students responded enthusiastically, became more active in class, and showed improved ability to identify main ideas, describe characters and plots, and relate texts to their daily lives.

Supporting factors included the school's commitment to literacy programs, the teacher's creativity, and a conducive classroom environment. Inhibiting factors included limited reading collections, varied reading abilities, time constraints, and an uneven home reading culture. To address these challenges, the teacher and school utilized digital reading resources, developed simplified teacher-made texts, implemented differentiated instruction, and

strengthened collaboration with parents through home reading assignments.

Overall, the study contributes to the development of adaptive and sustainable reading literacy programs in primary schools and provides a model of good practice that can be adapted by other teachers and schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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